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ABSTRACT

Integrating the new scholarship on women into the mainstream college curriculum is an important task for feminist teachers, not withstanding considerable resistance among traditionally minded male colleagues. Efforts to transform the psychology curriculum have met with additional problems because of psychology's commitment to the experimental method. With psychology, focusing on method is necessary to achieve the goal of integrating the new scholarship on women. Teaching of mainstream psychology is premised upon the experimental method and underlying assumptions: human behavior is determinative; there are laws governing how people behave; and it is possible to predict with certainty and in repeatable, observable form how people will behave. Underlying the experimental method is a series of assumptions, including objectivity and value neutrality. Undue reliance on the experimental method severely limits the understanding of human behavior. Feminist research explores the meaning of behavior rather than relying on measurement, and acknowledges rather than denies the intersubjectivity of the interaction between knower and person-to-be-known. Psychology can be taught in a manner inclusive of and consistent with the principles of the new feminist scholarship. If the college curriculum is to truly include women, then the basics, such as the introductory methods courses, where the tenets of the discipline are taught and learned, must be transformed. An 18-item reference list is included. (DB)

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FEMINIST TRANSFORMATION: TEACHING EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

The women's movement reawakened as an active social force in the late 1960s. While it had many fronts, its academic focus during the 1970s was to include women as a legitimate subject of classroom study and of scholarship. We were excited by the successful addition of women's courses to offerings within the disciplines and of women's studies programs within the curricula. We were also excited by the outpouring of feminist research about women.

The eighties, however, has brought a change in emphasis. As new scholarship on women has accumulated, feminist educators have felt increasing frustration that this material is not a part of the mainstream offerings within our disciplines, but remains ghettoized in the "women's" courses. As we have attempted to include the new scholarship in our "regular" courses, we have discovered that the task of integration requires rethinking our approach to the traditional material; when we add women we cover new material and raise new questions and necessarily omit some of the standard fare. Since a curriculum is typically built upon the assumption that students need to be exposed to a common body of standard fare, we have discovered that integrating women into our courses ultimately requires rethinking the entire curriculum (McIntosh, 1983).

As is true in other fields, the content of psychology, the

study of human behavior, has changed as a result of the feminist activity of the past fifteen years. Parlee's (1975) early review of the psychology of women indicated that before the feminist scholarship of the late sixties and early seventies psychology did not really include the study of women. Analyses by several different investigators, looking at publications from several different sub-fields of psychology, revealed that females were subjects in psychological research far less often than men. Investigators often made generalizations about humankind on the basis of research with males, although they carefully limited generalizations about women to research with females. When the performance of women was considered directly, researchers explained behavior by postulating feminine inner traits without considering the importance of the social context. Thus, psychological research reinforced the stereotyped beliefs that had long been used to justify the unequal political, legal, and economic treatment of women (Weisstein, 1971). Secondary sources and authors' summaries expanded conclusions about sex differences beyond the actual research findings, and almost always in the direction of traditionally stereotyped assumptions about women. Maccoby and Jacklin's (1974) review of the massive number of studies that reported about sex differences in children found very few consistent findings.

These criticisms led to some fine feminist research. A

large body of new scholarship on women now exists, along with journals and textbooks that make it available. Feminist psychologists have investigated phenomena previously overlooked, have reinterpreted traditional data and theory, and have developed new theoretical conceptions (Goleman, 1984). As in other fields, however, this new scholarship remains marginal to the teaching of the discipline. Students learn about it in women's courses, or courses taught by feminist professors -- always outside of the mainstream curriculum.

For years I have been trying to integrate the new scholarship on women into the teaching of psychology in my department. Although my colleagues have always welcomed the addition of women's courses, they have been much less receptive to changing our basic departmental offerings. I think there are three reasons for their resistance. First, they do not know the new material; they know what they learned in graduate school and the current work in their areas of interest. Reorganizing all of the courses, therefore, would necessitate a lot of work -- work that feminists would have to facilitate. Second, they believe that what they already teach is the important material; it is the accumulation of decades of research in psychology. They need to be convinced that what they are already doing is inadequate. Third, when I present them with particular examples of the new scholarship, they distrust the methodology. The new scholarship is different -- it is critical; it has a point of

view; it does not conform to the rules of scientific psychology. The first two problems are, I believe, common to the social science disciplines, but the third is particular to psychology.

From my experience working to change the way psychology is taught at my college, I have come to believe that in psychology there is a special problem, psychology's commitment to the experimental method. My paper will discuss why method is so important in psychology, and why a focus on method is necessary in order to achieve our goal of integrating the new scholarship on women into the mainstream curriculum.

Mainstream Psychology

I was trained at the University of Michigan as an experimental psychologist. My early research was in the field of human learning and memory. At that time I believed that by carefully designing and executing many scientific experiments, each focused precisely on an independent variable or two, one following the other in meaningful succession, psychologists could discover how people learn, what makes them forget, and ways to facilitate retention. I believed that there was a set of phenomena to be uncovered and that the experimental method was the proper tool for discovery.

The task of psychologists, as I saw it then, was to unravel

the long chain of events that constitute human behavior. As my esteemed graduate professor Arthur W. Melton was fond of saying, "For every stimulus there is a response, for every response there was a stimulus." Learning the connections between stimuli and responses, or causes and effects, if you prefer, was our scientific endeavor. This reflects one of the underlying assumptions of the experimental approach, namely that human behavior is determined. There are laws that govern how people behave; once we "crack the laws" we can predict what will happen with certainty and the repeatability of observations is assured.

The experimental method is taught as <u>the</u> scientific method. Psychology students learn to operationally define their independent and dependent variables, to use appropriate control groups, and to select random samples -- or at least we hope they learn these procedures. In our classrooms we generally focus on teaching scientific thinking and the experimental routine, and rarely focus on the underlying assumptions of the approach, or paradigm, that directs the method (Kuhn, 1962). In fact, we don't often have reason to consider the assumptions ourselves.

But underlying the legitimacy of the experimental method is a series of assumptions about the nature of knowledge; the experimental method developed in the natural science laboratories of the eighteenth century with philosophical roots in empiricism and logical positivism (Koch, 1969). The

experimental procedures designed for the study of inanimate objects necessitate that dependent variables be reduced to easily measurable behaviors; they emphasize quantitative analysis; they require that findings be universally repeatable; and they depend for objectivity upon the independence of the knower from the known.

These procedural proscriptions limit the study of human experience (Giorgi, 1965). Feminist criticism of psychological research focused my attention on research issues that I had never considered relevant before. I was confronted with the question of why the discipline devoted to the description, prediction, and control of human behavior excluded and misrepresented women. If, as I had been taught, science is objective and value-free, than why did psychology ignore or stereotype half the human population? The answer, of course, is that science is not value-free. The scientists who define the questions to be studied do so from within their own world views. Their values influence selection of the research problems, decision making about research designs, and interpretation of findings. When the "objects" of study are people, then the values of who does the studying are of crucial importance. Since the pre-sixties population of academic psychologists was almost exclusively male -- white, middle-class, middle-aged male, to be precise -- it is not surprising that they considered male college sophomores to be

representative of humankind, or that they lacked insight into the limiting social expectations for women.

Measuring public behavior, for example, is bound to give evidence for stereotypes. Because of the power relations in our society, within which women live, it is not possible to understand them by only recording their behavior. Even if we could be sure to ask the right research questions, and we can never be certain of that, we always run the risk of observing socially expected behavior, and mistaking performance for potential. Since society denies women freedom in behavior, it is impossible to understand women by limiting our evidence to their behavior, especially their public behavior. Yet, the mandate of the experimental paradigm is that dependent variables be behavioral.

Because of the way methodology is taught, however, few experimentalists realize thay are operating within any philosophical limitations. Rather they consider the restrictions of the method as necessary in order to maintain scientific objectivity. Seeing women's exclusion from psychology led me to the realization that, in fact, psychology as a discipline does not consider the wide variety of human experience. Just as women have been excluded from mainstream psychology, so have blacks and other minorities. In the search for general laws of behavior, individual scores are averaged into group means, highly disparate scores are sometimes even

excluded, and investigators rarely test their findings with different populations representing different groups of people in society. Theories are based upon evidence from the lives of boys and/or men. Then when the behavior of girls and/or women is different from what the theory predicts, females are considered deviant, usually less than normal. A good example of this process is Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. He developed his stages with males, but he considered his theory a general theory of moral development. When females were later tested and did not progress through the stages as expected, they were considered lower on the developmental scale, less able to handle moral issues than males. Only recently has Carol Gilligan's work (1982) shown the consistent observational and evaluation bias that permeated Kohlberg's work. In a Different Voice is based on studies with females and males, in and out of the laboratory, and provides a picture of moral development for women. It also points out the need to formulate a general theory of moral development based upon research with both sexes.

By assuming scientific neutrality rather than examining and defining the investigator's point of view, by assuming constancy of human experience rather than examining its variation, psychology exhibits a positivist bias. Traditional psychology has considered that individual facts are truths, and that facts accumulate into general theories which are sexually, and

racially, and historically neutral in their scientific objectivity. This may be true in the science of astronomy or the science of physics where the experimental method developed, but it is not true of the study of human behavior which necessarily goes on in a social, institutional, and historical context. The adoption of this experimental approach brought with it a conservative political perspective -- what is is to be studied not challenged. Mainstream psychology measures things as they are, uncritically; it sees the world of human behavior as static not changing.

This allows for a very limited concept of the human being and severely limits our ways of understanding human behavior. In an experiment the person-to-be-studied is to be treated as an object. I don't mean, of course, that we push her or shove him around. What we do is engineer the situation so that we rely only upon his or her behavior. We rarely ask why the person did what he or she did, or ask if alternative strategies were considered. We end up learning about objectified man rather than man or woman as person.

The experimenter-subject distinction is a limit to knowledge; it makes it impossible to learn from the subject how his or her understanding of the situation differs from that of the experimenter (Giorgi, 1967). Misinterpretation results, not scientific objectivity. This might not be particularly serious if psychologists published their findings in their professional

journals and that was the end of it. But their misguided findings have an impact on people in several different ways. Findings are popularized every day in mass-market magazines like Psychology Today and Science 84, as well as in daily newspapers. They also are accumulated into theories that then tell people how we are expected to behave if we are to be "normal." The findings of psychology are reflexive; they have impact on the lives of people of their time (Gadlin and Ingle, 1975).

Feminist Psychology

Because of these shortcomings, the experimental method is poorly suited to the study of women; feminist research can not conform to the assumptions of the experimental paradigm. Feminist research requires not only the measurement of patterns of behavior but also and understanding of why those patterns exist. It requires analysis of the situational context and the environment in addition to measuring the behavior and cognitions and feelings. It requires critical self-reflection (Keller, 1982).

By emphasizing controlled observation the experimental paradigm limits the questions that can be asked and the answers that can be found. Social issues of particular relevance to women, such as the psychology of rape, battering, or sexuality,

can not be fully studied experimentally. In order to pursue research questions that are relevant to women feminist researchers have been learning to employ methodology that is appropriate, meaningful, and congruent with the lives of women and the issues that affect them. In psychology that has meant breaking out of the limitations of the experimental framework.

Womanhood is a social construction that does not fit within the conception of natural laws. Understanding the psychology of women requires understanding the historical and social context in order to discover historically grounded, time specific truths. It requires the study of "variations within group and across time of the female experience," (Mednick, 1976, p. 769).

Traditional psychologists reject the inclusion into the discipline of the new scholarship on women because feminist research does not conform to their time-honored rules of science. In their eyes it is biased because it is not value free. Values, however, are an unavoidable part of scholarly work; they can be made explicit (as feminists try to do) or kept implicit (as the experimental paradigm encourages), but they are always there. "Yet," as Blau (1981, p.540) has pointed out, "to say it is virtually impossible for social science research to be value free is not to abandon the quest for truth in scholarship -- only to understand better the environment in which it takes place. . . . as scholars we can all aid this quest by making our values clear to our readers. Few are neutral -- it is not a

question of feminist versus 'objective' scholarship."

The research that has been useful in helping us to understand women has been work which has broken out of the binding restrictions of the experimental framework. It is work that is contextual, the situation is specific and real. This means that the research generally takes place in the field, rather than in the laboratory. It grants the importance of the social context to behavior and recognizes that different groups of people respond to the same social context differently. These conditions make it possible to study questions of gender and race. In addition to recognizing the importance of context, the research recognizes the importance of the intentionality of subjects, appreciates their active efforts to shape their social world, and concerns itself with their subjectivity.

What feminist researchers have been doing is developing a new research paradigm, with different assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the role of values in the scientific endeavor. Unlike the assumptions of the experimental -- or natural science -- paradigm, it tends to be wholistic rather than reductionistic, and qualitative rather than quantitative. It explores the meaning of behavior rather than relying on measurement, and acknowledges rather than denies the inter-subjectivity of the interaction between knower and the person-to-be-known. The emphasis is on research rather than experimentation. This new paradigm allows us to ask different

questions, to use different methods of data collection, and to interpret our results within a different framework. It does not abandon the quest for truth but instead perceives truth to be more historically and situationally based. Women have not been the first or the only psychologists calling for a change of paradigm (see, for example, Gergen, 1978; Reigal, 1978; Sampson, 1978). Some of our research has been ground-breaking, however, because the old paradigm did not work.

One further important aspect of the new paradigm is that by emphasizing the time specific nature of truth, it allows for the study of change; unlike the experimental paradigm it is not static. Since the conditions of women's lives have been changing so dramatically during this century, women need to be studied within the framework of social change. Feminist research raises fundamental questions about contemporary society in order to understand and facilitate social change.

Transforming the Curriculum

Psychology is taught as a science. Open any introductory text and its first or second chapter will tell you that the goal of psychology is to "control and predict human behavior." Even though the same textbooks will include chapters on personality and abnormal psychology, areas which have relied very little upon experimental methodology, the first chapters, as well as the first few weeks of class, make it clear that "good"

psychology is experimental psychology. Any topic is okay, but the method must be the scientific method, with carefully measured variables and appropriate controls, with statistical analyses and conformity to the .05 significance level. In most psychology departments the teaching of methodology has been left to the traditionalists, the hard-core experimentalists. Although feminists have been forging new research approaches, and discovering ways to shape the method to the questions rather than letting method take the lead, these find no place in the teaching of how to do or evaluate research (Roberts, 1981).

In order that students appreciate and integrate the new scholarship it is necessary that they learn ways of evaluating methods different from that which is traditionally taught. Interviews, for example, have been an important methodological tool in the new scholarship on women, but have had no legitimate place in the traditional methods course in psychology. We must teach critical understanding of the shaping function that method plays in the social sciences, and teach new methods as we are developing them.

I teach a course in Methods of Psychology. It is part of the sequence of courses we require of our majors, taken directly after our experimental psychology course. In this course I have had two goals. First, I want my students to understand the nature of the experimental paradigm and I want them to understand that it is not the only paradigm being used today.

Second, I want them to learn to do thoughtful research.

The paradigm specifies the scientist's relation to the world he or she investigates, as well as the investigation itself. It defines the scientist's way of looking at the world, the method for investigating what is seen, and a means for evaluating the results. By teaching a single methodology, experimental, based upon a single paradigm, natural science, we limit the philosophical understanding of our students, we limit the perspective of the research, and we limit the topics that are studied because not all topics lend themselves to experiments.

Posing other paradigms and other methodologies leads a student to recognize his or her own conceptual system and to locate his or her perspective in the larger social order, a far sounder practice than assuming his or her perspective is neutral and value free. This self reflection leads to a better understanding of the historical, cultural, and social limits of the research. It also leads to greater self understanding on the part of the research psychologist. Although self reflection is an important aspect of training in clinical psychology, research psychologists are not typically encouraged to examine their values, their feelings, their points of view within the range of existing opinions about any research question.

In addition to exploring these issues about the nature of science, I introduce my students to a wide variety of research

methods, among them observational techniques, interviewing, construction and use of questionnaires, content analysis, and correlational techniques. Students read an example of published research that utilized each particular method under consideration, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the method, and devise and carry out a piece of research based upon that method. Rather than advocating any particular method, I emphasize the importance of choosing interesting and important research questions first, then devising the best technique for studying them. I emphasize learning the history of the topic before proceeding to collect data. Alcohol use, delinquency, or homosexuality, for example, have long social histories and have been viewed differently in different places and times. Understanding the changes in definition and social context adds historical and cultural perspective to the research.

I also emphasize the importance of learning what other researchers have done before jumping into data collection. I want my students to be able to evaluate how much they know before they frame their research questions. If their library work locates a great deal of information, if sophisticated work has already been done on their topic, they may be able to formulate specific hypotheses. If little work has been done on that topic they may only be able to formulate general questions. Not all research can or should be tests of hypotheses.

This course is not a "women's" course. I have taken ideas that I have learned from my teaching and scholarship in the area of the psychology of women and incorporated them into a mainstream course in order to change the ability of my students to evaluate, appreciate, and incorporate into their psychological perspective the new scholarship on women. What they learn will, I hope, also enable them to ask critical questions of the material presented in traditional courses. It will make them better psychologists because, in fact, men are not adequately represented by traditional psychology either.

Methodology is basic to the teaching of psychology and, consequently, is basic to the inclusion of the new scholarship on women into the discipline. I propose that we confront this issue head-on by transforming the methods sections of our introductory courses, volunteering to teach the methods courses designed for our majors, and incorporating sections about methods into our other courses. If we are to transform the curriculum to include women, we must convince ourselves, our colleagues, and our students that a change in the basic tenets of psychology is necessary.

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